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IMPROVING CATTLE IN AREAS FREED OF TICKS



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As a result of systematic dipping of cattle to eradicate ticks the average increase in tick-free territory since 1906 has exceeded 24,000 square miles annually. Thus in the last 26 years more than 600,000 square miles of agricultural land in the South have been reclaimed from the domination of cattle ticks. In this vast area, which is being increased each year, livestock owners have been able to raise cattle under more favorable conditions than formerly. The absence of ticks has made possible the introduction and successful breeding of improved cattle.

Begin on a Small Scale

Experience has shown that, as a rule, it is better to grow into the cattle business than immediately to establish a large herd by purchasing all new stock. Native stock (fig. 1) can be used as a foundation and improved by the introduction and use of carefully selected purebred bulls. If one is not financially able to purchase bulls for the entire herd, one or more good purebred bulls should be bought and bred to the best cows in order that the more uniform and growthy bull calves may be selected and raised to breed to the remaining cows. A grade bull, even though he appears to be a good individual, cannot be depended on to transmit desirable characteristics uniformly to the offspring. Therefore good purebred bulls should replace grade bulls as rapidly as practicable.

Further improvement can be obtained later by culling out inferior animals, saving the best heifer calves, and continuing the use of purebred bulls. This method requires a minimum expenditure and will quickly grade up a herd to reasonable uniformity in color, size, and other desirable qualities. The greatest improvement is evident in the first cross, but each successive cross brings progeny more nearly like the purebred.

Consult Extension Workers

Cattle owners whose experience has been limited to ticky stock are advised to consult their county extension agents, or, in the absence of

such assistance, the livestock extension officials of the State agricultural colleges, who are always glad to give livestock growers helpful information on the best practices. Such officials also are in a position to suggest sources of good breeding stock. When there is considerable interest in cattle raising in a community, the formation of a local breeders' association is desirable. This provides a ready means for discussion of stock-raising problems, for the joint selection and purchase of breeding stock (fig. 2), and for dealing with various problems that arise.

Select Breeding Stock with Care

There are many benefits to be derived from raising the same breed of cattle in a community. For this reason it is desirable to select a breed of cattle which is well adapted for the locality and for whose



FIGURE 1.—Southern scrub cows. Animals of this kind are often used as a foundation for better herds

products there is a good market. This selection involves first the decision between the beef and dairy types, and finally the selection of the breed. There is greater difference in the merits of animals within various breeds than between breeds themselves, hence the importance of selecting breeding stock, bulls especially, with great care.

Some Typical Benefits

In the case of the beef breeds a steer which is classed as Good on the market will usually sell on the livestock market for about \$2.50 per hundredweight more than a Common steer. Any cattleman may readily figure the difference in value from stock coming under his own observation, using current market quotations. In general, well-bred animals (fig. 3) when properly fed, mature earlier, fatten sooner, produce more and better meat, and yield larger profits than inferior stock.

Good breeding in dairy cattle, especially the bull, results in a more profitable herd. It is important to remember that a dairy bull may

be the sire of 100 or more daughters, whereas a cow during her lifetime seldom produces more than half a dozen calves. A cow which produces about 4,000 pounds of milk in a year when bred to a good purebred dairy bull (fig. 4) may be expected to produce daughters which will yield from 5,000 to 7,000 pounds of milk a year. Proportionate increases may likewise be expected in butterfat production as a result of improved breeding.

When only a few cows are kept (fig. 5) and it is impracticable for the owner to keep a purebred bull, arrangements should be made, if possible, for breeding the cows to the best purebred bull in the locality. Another good way to obtain bull service is to organize a cooperative bull association. The Department of Agriculture will

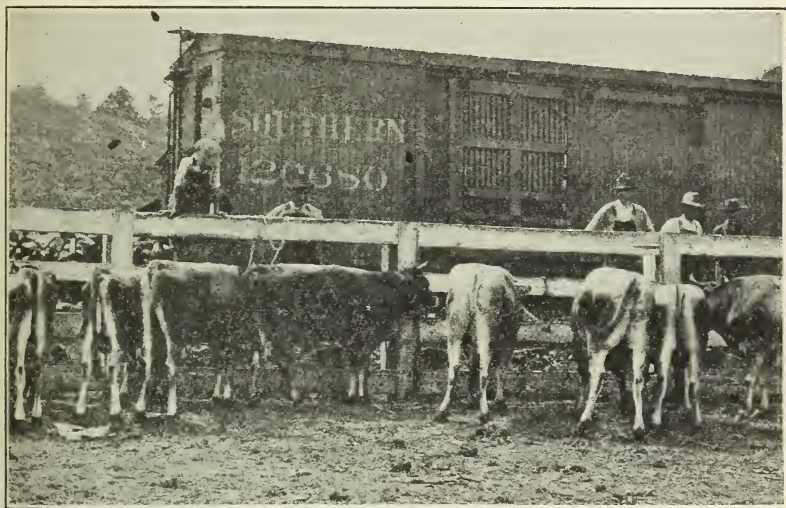


FIGURE 2.—Prospective buyers looking over a shipment of purebred bulls. Community interest in the same breed has many advantages

furnish interested persons with plans for forming this kind of organization.

The following 10 points in better breeding are essentials that should be kept in mind:

Ten Points in Better Breeding

1. There is no best breed of livestock. There is more difference in earning power between individuals of the same breed than among breeds.

2. Select and raise the breed best adapted to your locality. Encourage your neighbors to do likewise, for community breeding has many advantages.

3. Use only purebred sires of good type and good blood lines.

4. Sell for slaughter or castrate all scrub, grade, and inferior purebred sires.

5. The use of purebred dams as well as sires will greatly hasten improvement in herds.

6. Registration papers are the evidence of pure breeding. Best results in livestock improvement can be expected only when all eligible animals are registered and pedigrees carefully studied.

7. All kinds of livestock are more profitable when well fed and cared for; good breeding helps feed to give the best results.

8. Keep breeding stock free from disease and parasites by close attention to sanitation and by prompt veterinary treatment when needed.

9. Inbreeding should be practiced only by the most skillful breeders and by them only when they have detailed knowledge of the ancestry of the animal used.

10. Keep records of performance of your breeding animals.



FIGURE 3.—Grade cattle, of beef breeding, on carpet-grass pasture. Such animals give better returns than unimproved stock

Feeding Cattle

Pasture is usually the cheapest feed as well as one of the best for feeding either beef or dairy cattle. Ordinarily during spring and summer, when pastures are good, cattle require but little, if any, other feed; however, dairy cows which are giving a large flow of milk and beef cattle which are being fattened for market will usually produce greater returns when the pasture is supplemented by other feed.

The limits of this leaflet do not permit a detailed discussion of feeding various kinds of cattle at different ages and at different seasons of the year, but the principal essentials of feeding may be summed up briefly as follows.

Ten Points in Better Feeding

1. Growing animals make the best use of feeds; keep them growing.
2. Weaning time is a critical period; start feeding before weaning.
3. Balanced rations supply animals' needs with least feed.
4. Water and salt should always be accessible to animals.

5. Legumes, pastures, and succulent feeds aid production and profit.
6. Feed liberally for large production; mere maintenance yields no profits. Also feed regularly.
7. Breeding animals should be kept thrifty, not overfat.
8. Good feeding equipment prevents waste of feed and labor.
9. Parasites, exposure, and overcrowding retard growth and waste feed.
10. Feed costs are important; not all balanced rations yield equal profit.

Information on feeding problems may be obtained from State extension specialists, or from the United States Department of Agriculture.

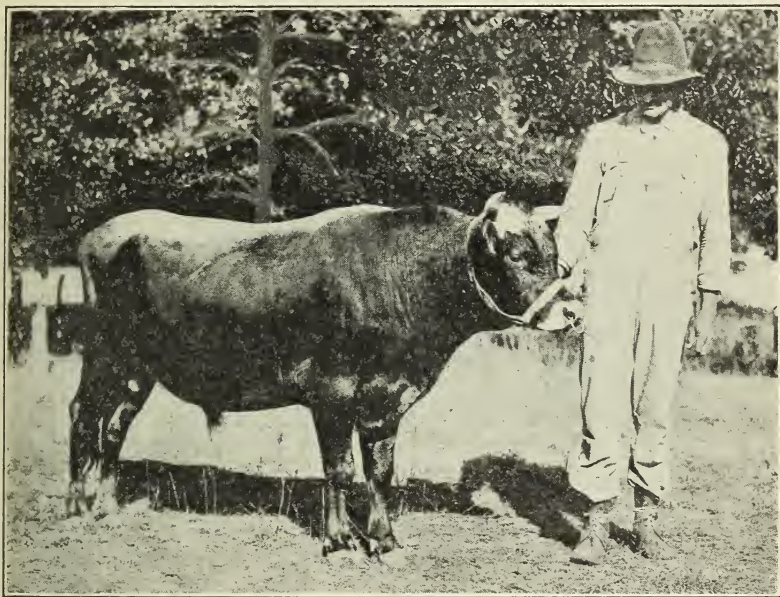


FIGURE 4.—A young dairy bull from a family of high producers. Selected sires rapidly improve common herds

Practical Suggestions

The experiences of those who have been successful in developing paying herds in areas freed of ticks should be helpful to the inexperienced who are establishing herds as well as to those who contemplate doing so. For instance, a cattleman of Escambia County, Fla., was considering the purchase of a purebred beef bull, but before doing so he decided to make a trip to New Orleans to see what advantages, if any, improved stock had over scrub stock appearing on the market. The observation which impressed this man principally was the fact that cattle of good breeding sold promptly, most of them being taken at good prices as they were being unloaded from the cars. He noted also that inferior or scrub stock did not sell so readily, that they were in the yards from 1 to 4 days, and then

moved at a much lower price than improved animals. It was evident that in marketing scrub stock he would receive a lower price and have larger feed and yardage bills.

A dairyman in a territory recently freed of ticks was skeptical concerning the merits of a registered dairy bull and hesitated to buy one. Later he stated that the difference in the value of a few yearling calves of the first crop from the purebred bull that he finally purchased, and the value of the same number of yearling scrub calves, was greater than the entire cost of the bull.

Placing Bulls on Range

Purebred bulls should be from 14 months to 2 years old when placed on the range. The best time to purchase bulls is in the fall of the year, since breeders usually sell them for less to avoid the expense of



FIGURE 5.—A small herd of purebred beef cattle on a southern farm

wintering them. Bulls purchased in the fall should be kept in small fields until spring, which is the preferred time to turn them out on the range. Unless the pasture on the range is unusually good, breeding bulls should have supplementary feed to keep them in good condition. It is important that the strength and vigor of breeding bulls be maintained whether they are confined to enclosures or allowed to run on the range.

Economy in Group Purchasing

There are economic advantages of better prices and less freight when the farmers of a community plan together to buy new breeding stock and have it shipped as one lot. Under such conditions an experienced livestock man can be chosen to make the selections, which is indeed an advantage to the less experienced farmers. An added advantage of such a community movement is that when cattle of equal breeding value have been purchased, arrangements may be

made among the purchasers to exchange bulls every two or three years. This prevents the necessity of selling the first bull and purchasing another to avoid inbreeding, which would be the case if a cattleman were operating without a cooperative arrangement.

Regarding the financing of bull buying, a practical and convenient method, when ready cash is not available, is to sell enough scrub cattle to provide the money for purchasing the required number of purebred bulls. A herd minus the scrubs sold to purchase a purebred bull is worth much more to a cattleman than the original herd, as it will prove more profitable when headed by a purebred bull. Progressive bankers in many instances have expressed their willingness to finance farmers in purchasing purebred bulls, and some desire no other security than a mortgage on the bull, provided the purchaser pays 25 per cent or more of the purchase price. Owners of such animals may protect themselves by insurance from loss in case a bull should die. The fact that insurance companies insure such animals at a reasonable rate indicates that very little risk is involved in bringing them into areas that are officially designated tick free.

Good pastures are desirable, of course, in any plan of stock raising, but cattlemen are advised not to experiment with various grasses. On the other hand, those grasses which are known to make good pasture under conditions prevailing in an area should be used. Carpet grass furnishes excellent grazing and is not difficult to start. This grass requires a fairly fertile and moist soil in order to make a good pasture and it will not thrive in a dry, sandy soil. Fencing open cut-over land, harrowing here and there, and sowing the seed under proper moisture conditions usually result in a good stand of carpet grass. Lespedeza may be mixed with the carpet grass, as both are favorites with cattlemen in the South who have been successful in starting good pastures.

Suggestions in Marketing

With the eradication of cattle ticks, Federal quarantine restrictions are removed and a much wider and freer market is a consequent result. Probably no printed information on opportunities for marketing improved livestock or their products can be made so impressive as a personal visit to a well-developed dairy district or to a large public livestock market. Ice-cream factories, cheese factories, and other dairy plants (fig. 6) are operating in many parts of the South that were formerly tick infested. The people in such localities need not be reminded that such industries have grown up only since the eradication of cattle ticks.

The improvement in types of cattle offered for slaughter at southern livestock markets is noteworthy. The percentage of animals having the markings, size, and type of recognized beef breeds is increasing each year, and cattle from the South are taking some of the most coveted prizes at national livestock and dairy shows. The United States Department of Agriculture has representatives at the larger markets who are engaged in the inspection of animals and meats and in the general supervision of market practices. Livestock owners are invited to consult these Federal employees in matters pertaining to the handling of livestock offered for sale.

The Department desires to keep livestock producers fully informed through the press, by radio, and by other means with current market quotations, and it maintains a market-information service which will give information on request.

With the gradual but persistent decrease of large beef herds in the West through the conversion of grazing land into farms and



FIGURE 6.—A local market helps the community. This southern creamery creates a market for butterfat from local herds

ranches, the Southern States must more and more help to supply the country's need for meat and dairy products. The first objective, however, should be to supply home and local requirements for these products (fig. 7).



FIGURE 7.—Cattle at a southern stockyard. The production of beef cattle helps to supply local demands for beef and provides a market for grass and other roughage

The South is in a position to meet these needs through the development of its possibilities as a livestock region.

